

IMPROVEMENT OF NAVIGATION OF MISSISSIPPI RIVER.

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MEMORIAL

OF

THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MINNESOTA,

FOR

*The improvement of the Mississippi river.*

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JANUARY 30, 1861.—Referred to the Committee on Commerce, and ordered to be printed.

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A MEMORIAL to Congress for an appropriation of money for improving the Mississippi river, from a point near the mouth of the Minnesota river to Sauk Rapids.

*To the honorable the Senate and House of Representatives in Congress assembled:*

Your memorialists, the legislature of the State of Minnesota, respectfully represent: That the navigation of the Mississippi river, a short distance below the mouth of the Minnesota or St. Peter's river, and the Falls of St. Anthony, a distance of about seven miles by the said Mississippi river, is, especially during the season of low water, so obstructed by rocks and other impediments as to render it difficult and hazardous for navigation; but that, by the appropriation and proper outlay of a reasonable sum of money, the said river between the points designated could be rendered easily navigable during the entire season for the largest class steamboats used on the Upper Mississippi; that within the last few years the citizens of St. Anthony and Minneapolis have expended for the improvement of said river, between the points aforesaid, more than ten thousand dollars, and at one time had a line of steamboats established to and from Fulton City.

During one season of navigation, after the establishment of these boats, there was as high as fifty-two steamboat arrivals at the landings of St. Anthony and Minneapolis, and from the same nearly six thousand tons of freight were delivered. Since the arrivals of that particular season, several thousand tons more of goods have been delivered in the same way; and, in the meantime, immense quantities of produce, including wheat, potatoes, rye, oats, and corn, have been shipped for the southern and eastern markets at these places, notwithstanding the serious obstructions to navigation mentioned.

It is a well-known fact, however, that a far greater number of steamboats would have visited these places during the period named had the river been in such a condition as to allow boats to run regularly during the season of navigation in each year.

Your memorialists further represent that the navigation of the Mississippi river between the said Falls of St. Anthony and Sauk Rapids, a distance by water of about ninety miles, is obstructed by rocks and sand-bars at several places to such an extent as to prove a serious impediment to steamboat navigation during a large portion of the summer and fall season.

Notwithstanding these difficulties, private enterprise has caused the running of two steamboats for several years, during the navigable season, between these points.

With a suitable appropriation made by Congress, and judiciously expended, it is very evident that these obstructions could be removed, and this important channel of commerce rendered navigable during the entire season of navigation.

The following are some of the reasons which your memorialists respectfully, but earnestly, press upon your attention as furnishing the most ample grounds, in their judgment, for the appropriations herewith solicited.

*First.* The immediate region of country watered by that portion of the Mississippi desired to be improved is already of vast agricultural, manufacturing, and commercial importance.

Sauk Rapids, St. Cloud, Clearwater, Monticello, Dayton, Anoka, Minneapolis, and St. Anthony, are all important and flourishing towns and cities along this portion of the river.

Sauk Rapids affords an excellent water power, and for this the Falls of St. Anthony has long since obtained a just and wide-spread celebrity.

As a means of furnishing lumber for building purposes, its development is strongly demanded by large portions of Missouri, Iowa, Illinois, and Wisconsin, as well as southern, middle, and western Minnesota. The rich and extended agricultural valleys of Sauk river and Crow river, (important tributaries of this section of the Mississippi) with their constantly increasing surplus productions, are directly interested in the use and improvement of this great channel of commerce.

The valley of the Red river of the North, which promises soon to undergo rapid development, also looks to this part of the Mississippi as a great aid in reaching a southern and eastern market.

*Second.* A valuable and constantly increasing trade has commenced with the celebrated Selkirk Settlement, in the British possessions, on the Red river.

The restrictive policy so long pursued by the Hudson's Bay Company has at last been changed, and the door thrown open to all the benefits of a lively competition. The old and expensive lines of communication by Hudson's bay and Rainy lake are about abandoned, and the immense amount of merchandise now designed for the Selkirk region is carried by way of St. Paul, and from thence almost through the heart of Minnesota.

The vast quantity of goods now transported by the Hudson's Bay Company from St. Paul to St. Cloud would *all* seek the Mississippi river in case it was in suitable navigable condition. The more expensive and tedious mode of transporting by teams would soon be comparatively abandoned for the benefits of steamboat navigation.

The British government and people would seek this channel in their intercourse with their northwestern possessions, especially since steamboat navigation, through American enterprise, has been introduced on the Red river.

Great benefits would certainly accrue to the United States government in the removal of these obstructions to free navigation by the better and cheaper facilities afforded for transporting supplies to our military posts at Forts Ripley and Abercrombie ; also to the different Indians tribes in the north and northwest.

That portion of Minnesota so much interested in the improvement of this section of the Mississippi has increased largely in population within the last few years, and holds out greater promises than ever for the future.

*Third.* The importance of rendering the Mississippi river ultimately navigable to the nearest practicable point from its source is becoming more evident each succeeding year. This stream far transcends any other on the globe in the breadth and value of its commercial interests.

It is eminently the great national river of our country, and ought to be regarded with the highest concern by every quarter of the Union.

If the construction of a grand Pacific railway, linking together the great interests of the Atlantic and Pacific, is considered a matter of wise national policy, are not these the most potent reasons, also, why a proper share of attention should be given by the general government to this mighty central channel of northern and southern intercourse?

It has its rise far in the interior of Minnesota. Six hundred and sixty-three miles of its length lies within our own State limits ; an additional one hundred and thirty-four miles washes our eastern boundary, making seven hundred and ninety-seven miles in all, properly belonging to and connected with our State.

The immense distance of twenty-nine hundred miles is traversed from its source to its mouth at the Gulf of Mexico, gathering and distributing, in its majestic course, the commerce of over a dozen States of the Union, having an aggregate population of more than thirteen millions of people.

*Fourth.* This portion of the Mississippi for which aid is asked has never been the recipient of any favors at the hands of the general government. *Not a dollar has ever been given for this purpose ;* in fact, the same may be said concerning this river for many hundred miles below the Falls of St. Anthony.

Those engaged in commercial pursuits have been left to struggle with the perils and dangers of navigation, along with many other difficulties attendant upon the settlement of a new country.

During all this time liberal and generous appropriations have been made by Congress for rivers and streams in other sections of the country of far less magnitude and importance in a commercial point of view.

So has it been in regard to our seabords of the east and south in the

line of munificent donations to improve harbors, to build piers and light-houses, to survey our coasts, and to protect our commerce.

For the promotion of these great interests the northwest has always been found a willing and generous friend.

During the many years that she has thus aided other sections of the country in obtaining full and just encouragement from the national government, she has at the same time made the largest contributions to the federal treasury.

By her great consumption of foreign imports she has contributed about one-half the annual revenue of the general government, in comparison with which all the national expenditures ever made for the benefit of any quarter of her extended domain is insignificant.

Although fully conscious of her just claims to a reasonable proportion of our national benefits, the great west has patiently and perseveringly advanced in the face of all obstacles.

Believing that the time, however, is now at hand when it must be clearly apparent that a more liberal policy should be adopted by Congress, especially with regard to objects of absolute national interests, your memorialists call for this appropriation with great confidence that it will be granted.

The new impetus which would be given to the cause of agriculture, manufactures, and commerce, by such an act upon the part of Congress, would soon demonstrate the wisdom of such a step to every section of the country.

Your memorialists, therefore, ask that an appropriation of forty thousand dollars be made for the improvement of that portion of said river described below the Falls of St. Anthony, and the further sum of fifty thousand dollars to improve the same between said falls and Sauk Rapids. And your memorialists will ever pray.

GEO. WATSON,

*President of the Senate pro tem.*

JARED BENSON,

*Speaker of the House of Representatives.*

Approved January nineteen, one thousand eight hundred and sixty-one.

ALEX. RAMSEY.

SECRETARY'S OFFICE, MINNESOTA,

*St. Paul, January 19, 1861.*

I hereby certify the foregoing to be a true copy of the original on file in this office.

J. H. BAKER, [L. s.]

*Secretary of State.*